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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CHISINAU 000496

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PBTS](#) [EAID](#) [PINR](#) [MD](#)  
SUBJECT: TN SUPPORTS WORKING GROUPS NOT FULL PACKAGE

Ref: Chisinau 466

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Kelly Keiderling for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: In a May 7 meeting, Charge Keiderling and P/E Chief Daria Fane met Transnistrian (TN) "Deputy Foreign Ministers" Yastrebchak and Simonenko to discuss TN participation in the working groups and USG assistance. The Transnistrians complained about one-sided discussions in the working groups and about previous agreements that had been ignored. They also wondered whether Chisinau was really ready to negotiate and cited the need for international guarantees of any agreements reached between Chisinau and Tiraspol. The Transnistrian leadership has not yet decided on MCC participation, but would send its experts to talks with the Moldovan side, if hosted by the Embassy. The deputies would also assist on unimpeded passage of Operation Provide Hope equipment. End Summary.

#### Working Groups Useful to Resolve Practical Problems

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¶2. (C) "First Deputy Minister" of Foreign Affairs Yastrebchak said the Transnistrian side was interested in using the working groups to resolve concrete, practical problems, particularly in the areas of transportation, environment, agriculture and humanitarian assistance. He believed each working group should produce an agreement to be signed by Chisinau and Tiraspol. The Transnistrians favored a genuine two-sided debate, with the TN opinion included in the final document and not a document forced on them by Moldovan government (GOM) officials. They wanted each working group to be headed by two co-chairs, so both sides ideas would be represented.

#### TN blames GOM for Railroad Problems

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¶3. (C) Yastrebchak also wondered whether Chisinau officials were really ready to negotiate with the Transnistrians. He gave an example of TN's suggesting a resolution to the railroad impasse, but Chisinau stopped short the negotiations on the issue of train ownership. (Note: Chisinau holds that Transnistria illegally seized the railroads on its territory, establishing its own illegitimate railroad company, and that all railroads and rolling stock remain the property of Moldova.)

¶4. (C) Yastrebchak cited distrust and the need for guarantees for any agreements as the final major issue regarding the working groups. He complained that many previous agreements signed between Tiraspol and Chisinau were now being ignored. The working groups were now attempting to start with a clean slate, he said, but needed to either update or eliminate the old agreements.

#### TN Wants MCC Roads but Bridge Closed, Customs Problems

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¶5. (C) The two deputies were aware of the MCC compact proposal to possibly reconstruct the M-14 and M-21 roads in TN. When Charge d'Affaires suggested it would be useless to repair the roads unless the Gura Bicului Bridge were opened (the bridge links the left-and

right-bank portions of the M-14), Simonenko said the Transnistrians needed an assurance that the bridge not be used for military purposes. Voronin had refused to sign an earlier agreement on this issue. The deputies claimed TN readiness to open the bridge, but blamed the Moldovan side for blocking it.

¶16. (C) Yastrebchak also complained about customs stamps. Transnistria was interested in the transport of goods, he said, but the TIR (International Road Transportation) carnet system required customs stamps, and TN stamps lacked international recognition.

¶17. (C) The deputies said that the TN leadership had not yet determined how far they were willing to go in dealing with American partners, and, as part of this internal debate, the decision to participate in MCC had not yet been resolved. Yastrebchak openly told us that the TN decision to work with the USG required overcoming some psychological and ideological barriers on the Transnistrians' part. He also speculated that, in the end, the TN decision would be positive.

¶18. (C) In the meantime, the deputies agreed that Transnistria would cooperate on the next steps required by MCC, i.e., that TN road experts participate in direct discussions together with GOM officials. To minimize direct contacts with the GOM, they preferred to participate in a meeting hosted by the American Embassy. They expressed some enthusiasm for this new level of openness dealing directly with the American side.

MFA Deputies also Helpful on Operation Provide Hope

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¶19. (C) Charge d'Affaires informed the TN MFA Deputies about plans for  
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distribution of Operation Provide Hope medical equipment to Moldova, including five TN institutions. Though the TN "Ministry" of Health would have the lead in ensuring distribution of these goods in TN, the TN MFA promised to do its part to facilitate by informing border authorities. They requested that assistance not be given through the GOM and that the process not be politicized.

Comment

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¶10. (C) While "Foreign Minister" Valerie Litskai the higher-ranking Litskai usually dominates meetings with his rhetoric, this session with his deputies allowed us a more pragmatic discussion of conflict negotiations and USG assistance. We heard that Simonenko has links to the TN State Security organs, but the two officials (probably in their thirties) were nonetheless very open to cooperation with the USG, and pleased to share their own points of view.

¶11. (C) We noticed a difference in approach between Chisinau and Tiraspol on the working groups. While the GOM seeks a total package approach to be solved by 5 plus 2 negotiations, the Transnistrian side is hoping to resolve pragmatic issues one by one through the working groups, without tackling the ultimate status question.

KEIDERLING